

NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 8th DECEMBER 2025

Present:

Cllr Julie Macdonald Town Mayor

Councillors:

Cllr Emma Guy	Cllr Tom Melville
Cllr Kate Cernik	Cllr Patricia Parkes
Cllr Stephen Harcombe	Cllr Rachel Waterman
Cllr Andy Kent	Cllr Catriona Stewart
Cllr Andy Stott	Cllr Tom Melville
Cllr Janet Illidge	Cllr Arthur Neil
Cllr Robert Cernik	Cllr Lee Siddall
Cllr Sam Naylor	Cllr Catherine Fox
Cllr Brian Holland	

Also present:

Chris Shaw	Chief Officer
Cath Kirwan	Deputy Chief Officer/Responsible Finance Officer

NTC 25/81 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alison Gerrard, Cllr Olwyn Dean, Cllr Graham Emmett and Cllr Joanna Callaghan.

NTC 25/82 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interest under the following categories:

- Pecuniary Interest
- Outside Bodies Interest
- Family, Friend or Close Associate Interest

Councillor Rachel Waterman, Councillor Patricia Parkes, Councillor Arthur Neil and Councillor Sam Naylor declared an interest in any matter relating to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Councilor Sam Naylor declared an interest in Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust.

Date.....

.....
Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

Richard George introduced himself to the Council and confirmed that he has made a formal request to the CWaC Monitoring Officer regarding his allegation for NTC's withholding of material. He also raised an additional question about which organisation is funding the legal fees regarding potential changes to Verdin Park, and under what legal authority is permitted to do so? If it is the Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, then the Council should confirm that no benefit, right of use, concession, licence, or land access agreement is being negotiated in exchange for this funding and provide clarity on whether this represents a direct financial interest in land held on statutory trust for public recreation. Mr George also queried why NTC are spending money on expensive barristers, which is in addition to the questions already submitted by email. NTC are currently awaiting the Monitoring Officer's response. Richard George confirmed he will be submitting a further request to Chris Shaw by email and will receive a reply in due course.

Katie Astbury reported that she had emailed the Chief Officer earlier in the week regarding the barrister engaged by the Council and the issue of this being funded by NTC. She noted that she had been informed her response would be deferred pending a reply from the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust.

Ms Asbury asked on what basis NTC had acted at the time the Chief Officer enquired about potential funding from the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust for the barrister. Ms Astbury advised that, during the past week, she had received formal confirmation by email that a barrister has engaged to review matters relating to Verdin Park. She further reported that she had been told a full response would only be provided once clarification had been received from the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust regarding their funding position.

Ms Astbury reported that information received during the week indicated that the barrister would be funded by the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust. She noted that she had previously requested clarification on the matter but had been advised that confirmation could not yet be provided. Ms Astbury expressed concern that this ongoing uncertainty could undermine confidence in the Council's decision-making.

Cllr Kent asked for clarification, and Ms Asbury reiterated that the situation gives her no confidence in the Council. She asked why the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust is funding the barrister and stated that she believes NTC holds the relevant information but that it has not been provided to her.

Cllr Waterman asked the Deputy Chief Officer to clarify the query raised by Ms Astbury regarding the seeking of legal advice. The Deputy Chief Officer reported that the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust had confirmed they would be funding the barrister. It was further noted that this matter had been recorded in the minutes, with a recommendation that NTC seek additional legal clarification.

Ms Astbury further clarified that the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust would be paying for a barrister to obtain land clarification in relation to their proposed car park, specifically to determine whether a car park can be constructed on the site.

Cllr Guy asked where the social media information had been seen. Ms Astbury advised that she did not wish to name the Councillor who is present in the room. Cllr Guy noted that the information had only come to light after last month's Council meeting. She emphasised that if something has appeared on social media, it is important for Northwich Town Council to take appropriate action.

Date.....

.....
Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

It was noted that discussions have taken place since the last meeting and that the Council remains in ongoing discussions with the Trust. Further discussion and agreement will be required going forward.

Councillor Fox stated that the Town Council had a responsibility to undertake 'due diligence' on issues raised with the Council and the Trust concerning ownership. She clarified that the Council is not responsible for building the car park and has sought appropriate advice. Councillor Fox stated that the lease is not being taken out by the Council, and it should be the Trust's responsibility to fund the necessary legal advice to ensure all requirements are met. The Town Council's intention is to protect itself and comply with any legal obligations.

Mr George asked if Councillor Fox was legally trained. Councillor Fox confirmed that she was not but had previously pointed out that she had experience in land and planning matters.

Councillor Kent commented that the Chief Officer, on behalf of the Council, had initially indicated that there were no impediments to continuing discussions with the Hospital Trust. Council members acknowledged that challenges have arisen and confirmed that further specialist legal advice is being sought before any further action, at no cost to the Council.

Councillor Kent noted that some councillors contribute to social media and have observed repeated statements that are untrue or contradict previously stated points. He emphasised that the Council is acting in the best interests of the town and will continue to monitor the situation.

Mr George commented that Councillor Kent is incorrect as he believes that NTC has offered to build the car park themselves and it isn't black and white as Councillor Kent has said.

Ms Astbury expressed appreciation for Northwich Town Council's openness. She highlighted that it is significant that Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust is unable to fund legal advice as this was not legally permitted between public bodies. Referring to Mr George's earlier comments, she noted that there is often considerable pushback from residents, who do not understand why Verdin Park would be considered for use.

Councillor Fox asked about the source of the legal advice. Ms Astbury clarified that the advice came from her daughter, who is a specialist barrister in this field. Councillor Fox thanked Ms Astbury for the clarification.

NTC 25/84 POLICE UPDATE

There was no Police Update

NTC 25/85 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

5.1 The minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 3rd November 2025 be confirmed and approved as a true and accurate record.

*Proposed by Cllr Arthur Neil and seconded by Cllr Andy Stott
All agreed.*

Minutes to be signed by the Mayor.

Date.....

.....
Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

NTC 25/86 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- 6.1 To note Finance, Amenities & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Monday 17th November 2025
- 6.2 To note Planning Committee meeting held on Monday 24th November 2025

Members noted the minutes of the meetings

NTC 25/87 TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor's diary – November 2025

Town Mayor's Communications	
1 st November	Firefest
2 nd November	St. Helens Church, Andrew Ridley Service
8 th November	A Night of Remembrance, Royal British Legion
9 th November	Remembrance Sunday
9 th November	Remembrance Sunday at Rudheath Cemetery <i>attended by Deputy Mayor</i>
13 th November	Sir John Deanes College, Musical Soiree
14 th November	Winsford Town Mayors Mega 80s Night
20 th November	St. Lukes Hospice, Light up a Life Christmas Tree
29 th November	Christmas Extravaganza Northwich
30 th November	St. Lukes Hospice, Light up a Life 2025, attended by Deputy Mayor

Councillor Macdonald thanked both Northwich Town Council and Winsford Town Council for their donation of a tree to St. Luke's Hospice.

NTC 25/88 CHIEF OFFICERS REPORT

Members received the report from the Chief Officer.

Councillor Naylor commented that it is disappointing that the Town Bridge cannot be displayed and has spoken to the Director for Canal and River Trust but is confident that the Chief Officer will make this happen.

Members noted the Chief Officers Report

NTC 25/89 VICTORIA INFIRMARY PROPOSED CAR PARK EXTENSION

Members received a report from the Chief Officer and clarified that the Trust is Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust.

Members noted the Chief Officers Report

Date.....

.....
Cllr Julie Macdonald
Mayor

NTC 25/90 REDUCTION IN PCSO'S

Members received a report on the reduction in PCSO's and this included a letter from Dan Price, the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillors will respond to the letter, Councillor Stewart commented that it is not councillors' role to tell the police how to do their job or the chief constable how to do theirs. Nevertheless Councillor Stewart has concerns as the police deal with crime after it's taken place but PCSOs get involved with the community and crime prevention; part of their role is going into schools meeting with the pupils who form positive attitudes to the law and police.

Councillor Guy has already written to the Cheshire Constabulary and the PCC and has copied in our MP Andrew Cooper and has asked a series of questions what the process is and what is the impact and what will happen to PCSO and what does the saving look like for neighbourhoods.

Councillor Cernik has had different experiences with PCSOs and some have been fantastic and have demonstrated great staying power and has done great work with young people to address ASB. Some PCSOs do come and go and go on to join the police, PCSO really do contribute to the local areas.

NTC will invite Dan Price to a future council meeting.

Councillor Kent is interested in what the PCC response will be back to Councillor Guy and is concerned on the impact it will have in our area.

Councillor Parkes commented that this is a great shame in losing PCSOs.

Councillor Guy felt for a PCSO who has contacted her and is concerned about his future with the Police. They have a wealth of knowledge and are part of the community neighbourhood and wants to know the process of the decision.

Councillor Naylor commented that the decision came out of the blue and sits on the PCC panel and has always valued the contribution that PCSOs delivery as they are the eyes and ears of community and was involved in the first recruitment selection of PCSO. Police and Councils, NHS they have all been hollowed out and the funds are not there to provide services that we need. We need to get a better assessment to see what is being proposed and what the PCC response will be as we might get more police officers.

Councillor Cernik would like to make a proposal and invite Dan Price, PCC to see what the rational is then write to the Cheshire Constabulary for further decisions. Also invite the Chief Inspector Leeroy to inform us what the plan is.

*Proposed by Councillor Kate Cernik and seconded by Councillor Catriona Stewart
All agreed*

NTC 25/91 PROPOSED CW&C COUNCIL LICENCE FEES

Members received a report from the Chief Officer regarding the proposed Cheshire West & Chester (CWaC) Council Licence Fees.

Councillor K. Cernik asked whether Northwich Town Council (NTC) had previously paid a licence fee. The Chief Officer confirmed that NTC had not, although other councils do.

Date.....

.....
**Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor**

Councillor Fox asked who would be responsible for paying the electricity costs. The Chief Officer explained that Scottish Power would invoice NTC, and she queried whether there were any legal reasons for this arrangement.

Councillor Waterman asked why the fees were being introduced and whether there was justification, expressing concern that they could be detrimental to the town centre.

Councillor Fox noted her experience with CWaC and questioned why fees were being applied in some areas but not others, asking specifically why Ellesmere Port and Chester, which are not parished, do not pay similar fees.

Councillor K. Cernik asked about fees for events. The Chief Officer confirmed that these fees were reasonable, as an event plan would be reviewed by the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) before a decision is made.

Councillor Kent questioned how such decisions could be made without consultation with affected parties.

It was proposed that NTC write to CWaC Council highlighting the potential impact and possible loss of events if these charges are imposed. The Council will seek further clarification and invite Councillor Bingham and Charlotte Walton, the lead CWaC Senior Officer, to discuss the matter.

*Proposed by Cllr Sam Naylor and seconded by Cllr Catriona Stewart
All agreed*

NTC 25/92 OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Kent updated members on the Community Rail Partnership. He reported that traffic on the Mid Cheshire Line increased by 14% in October, which is very encouraging. Cancellations have decreased; however, new trains will not be introduced until 2030. Punctuality stands at 86%, and Sunday services continue to be affected by the longest industrial dispute in the country. The ticket office is scheduled to transfer to Northern Rail this month.

Councillor Kent also raised concerns regarding the deteriorating condition of the building owned by CWaC, describing it as a disgrace. He proposed that Northwich Town Council write a short letter to CWaC Properties to seek accountability for the building.

Councillor Cernik reported on her attendance at the Community Care Partnership. She recently attended an event with Home Instead and noted that the monthly Dementia Friendly Group meetings continue. She expressed a desire to work with BID Northwich and local businesses to promote Dementia Awareness and to see the Dementia Bus return to Northwich for further awareness sessions.

It was proposed that NTC write to CWaC Properties requesting an explanation regarding the condition of the building.

*Proposed by Councillor Kent and seconded by Councillor Brian Holland.
All agreed*

Date.....

.....
**Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor**

NTC 25/93 CWAC MEMBERS

Councillor Neil reported that S106 funds are to be allocated to Hunts Lock to improve functionality, restore railings, and refurbish the footpath. He also noted that Saxons Lane has submitted new plans and an Asset of Community Value (ACV) application for Navigation Road.

Councillor Waterman provided an update on an event for Cheshire Central, formerly the Mid Cheshire Board/Partnership, highlighting that it presents an opportunity to create positive regional change.

Councillor Naylor reported that he has been covering Councillor Deans' casework and sent his best wishes for her recovery. He confirmed there are no asylum hotels in Northwich and commented on the work of the Fact Not Fiction team. Councillor Naylor has also been involved in matters concerning contaminated land in the area.

Regarding Weaver Square, presentations were received from VINCI and ION, who will be consulting on developments in the area. Councillor Naylor emphasised the importance of public and councillor input and noted an opportunity for up to 10 interested parties to join a consultation board.

He also updated members on flooding issues, noting that the government has allocated £50 million. VALOUR is exploring ways to engage with veterans to ensure they receive necessary support. Councillor Naylor mentioned involvement with LSEP, which will provide employment opportunities. He also noted a guided tour of the library by Sir Hugo Brunner from Oxford, who intends to return for the library opening, which will be a significant addition to the town centre.

Councillor Guy asked about the start date for the incinerator. Councillor Naylor confirmed that cold testing will begin in 2026, with full operation expected by April 2027. Councillor Guy asked if the community would be informed of any breaches, and Councillor Naylor confirmed that a community response will be provided as per the planning application. Councillor Naylor also extended an invitation for any members wishing to visit the site.

NTC 25/94 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Council meeting will be Monday 5th January 2026 at 6.00 pm

Meeting closed at 7.30pm

Date.....

.....
Cllr Julie Macdonald
Town Mayor